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CRITICISMS AND DISCUSSIONS.

THE REVELATION OF PRESENT EXPERIENCE.

Dr. Edmund Montgomery, the hermit philosopher of Liendo plantation, has written another book¹ which contains in a popular form the gist of his philosophy. Instead of reviewing this book we prefer to let Dr. Montgomery speak in his own words. He may be characterized as a scientific mystic who stands in awe at the mystery of existence and especially of organized life. He devotes much space to the vexatious problem of idealism and realism. He opposes religious superstitions; he rejects them and yet favors a teleological interpretation of nature and bases his monism upon a mental substance as ultimate reality. The extracts of his views are here given in his own words:

"It is safe to say that the world-revelation contained in the present experience of cultured man is most consistently and positively recognized by help of the collective results attained in the various provinces of scientific research. It is relevant, then, to inquire what sort of general survey our scientifically enlightened thinking is at present justified in constructing on the strength of this newly acquired information. (Page 1.)

"The physical medium in which all life is carried on is apparently the same for animals as for man, yet in man it has become transfigured into a supersensible world of transcendent import. (5). To get to understand the gradual formation and memorized fixation of the latent content of our conscious microcosm is a more fundamental task than the mere analysis of this content, when it becomes manifest in actual awareness ready-made. (6).

¹ *The Revelation of Present Experience*. Boston: Sherman French & Co., 1910. His large work, *Philosophical Problems in the Light of Vital Organization*, was discussed at length in *The Monist*, XIX, 582. Since this review was written Dr. Montgomery passed away on April 17 at his home on the Liendo Plantation near Hempstead, Texas. For further particulars of his life and death see *The Open Court* of June, 1911, p. 381, and *The Monist* of October 1909, p. 582.

"A flame may to some slight extent illustrate the true nature of consciousness. A flame, as visual phenomenon, is the fleeting but sustained result of the process of combustion. Consciousness, as sentient phenomenon, is the fleeting but sustained result of the process of vital organization. In order to sustain the flame entirely new amounts of combustible raw-material have to be supplied. In order to sustain consciousness the integrity, and therewith the efficiency of vital organization has to be maintained by assimilation of new complemental material. A flame, as visual phenomenon, is itself a forceless outcome of the process of combustion. Consciousness, as a sentient phenomenon, is a forceless outcome of the process of vital organization. The visual flame, an ideal product of real combustion, illuminates into present awareness the manifold content of the field of vision. Consciousness, an ideal product of real vital organization, resuscitates in present awareness the manifold latently preserved and memorized content of past experience, as guidance for present and future actions. (7-8).

"Grossly insufficient as it will sound, life, as merely physically or perceptually revealed, consists in a specific cycle of motions maintaining the constitution and vitality of the living substance of which all organisms are composed. This specific cycle of motions is set going by definite stimulating influences that impinge from outside upon the highly complex and mobile chemical compound, disintegrating it to some extent. Whereupon the disintegrated substance reintegrates itself from within by force of indwelling affinities. Chemically expressed, it resaturates itself by combining with complemental material afforded by the medium. Whenever and wherever on our Mother Earth this process of alternate disintegration and reintegration has taken place in ever so rudimentary a manner in what proves to be an integrant chemical compound, there life has originated. It has not fallen from the skies as a creation ready-made. Nor has a separate vitalizing imponderable principle seized upon ponderable material and coerced it into structural arrangements, imparting to it the endowments and efficiencies displayed by organisms. The unfathomable awe-inspiring mystery attaching to life in its multitudinous manifestations lies altogether in the intrinsic endowments mysteriously accruing to it in ever heightened modes of efficiency accompanying its structural development. Surely a creative result most mysteriously attained. (9-10).

"It is a chimerical expectation to think that one can ever arrive at a valid interpretation of organic life in its relation to the environ-

ment and the world at large, either by viewing the whole as consisting exclusively of mental modes, generally conceived as a system of self-evolving concepts, or as a conglomeration of self-associated sensations; or on the other hand, by viewing the whole as a combination of mere material configurations consisting of aggregated atoms mechanically actuated.

,"Idealists deceive themselves with words when they believe they can consistently account in mental terms for any fact or occurrence of perceptible nature. (12-13).

"Naturalists, on the other hand, look upon living organisms as mere intricate mechanical contrivances, constructed out of ordered aggregations of inert material particles, and being set going by imparted modes of motion; to such mechanistic and materialistic naturalists the apparently astounding activities of these definitely grouped arrangements of material elements or so-called organisms, are really nothing but unwilling motor-performances of the material mechanism, running their course wholly independent of the accompanying psychical by-play. (15).

"The utter insufficiency of this view comes, however, glaringly to light when living organisms are held to be composed of inert material particles actuated by imparted motion or transferred energy. (16).

"It is almost cruel, moreover, to remind the advocates of the physical theory of biological occurrences, that during their occupation with these materialistic and mechanistic explanations, they lose sight of their own mentally guided and mentally cognizing activities, which alone enable them to apprehend and conceive what they consider to exist and to occur outside their own perception and conception. Evolving the logical consequences to which their mechanistic views necessarily lead, they can find no legitimate way of reaching mind or consciousness in general, and therewith no way to the very consciousness within which their own reality-depleted conception of organic life has its exclusive existence. Such downright *reductio ad absurdum* of the purely mechanical conception of life and nature in general would deserve to evoke Homeric laughter, if it had not, in physics at least, proved pragmatically so exceedingly fruitful in the cause of enlightenment and liberation from gross superstitions.

"Employed as a working hypothesis in the precise investigation and exact discrimination of sense-revealed natural occurrences, with no pretensions as regards a true and valid interpretation of their

real nature, physical science has claims on our gratitude and admiration that surpass all estimates. (18-19).

"It is evident that without an extra-conscious matrix, which latently preserves past experience, no conscious content whatever would arise into actual awareness. Pure idealism would then have no world-revelation as subject-matter to idealistically interpret.... In fact every kind of idealism derives its entire content from that extra-conscious source. (22).

"The consistent materialistic and mechanistic view excludes from its interpretation of nature all participation of modes of conscious awareness as superfluous epiphenomena, which merely accompany but nowise influence what causatively and necessarily happens in a world of moved matter. The consistent idealistic view, on the other hand, denies altogether the existence of an extra-conscious physical or perceptible world. Physics, then, has no room for mind; psychics no room for matter. In modern times, ever since Descartes bisected nature trenchantly into an extended material substance and an unextended thinking substance, this dualism of matter and thought, of body and mind, has given rise to no end of philosophical perplexities, until weary of so much contention, physicists as well as psychologists found rest at last in the hypothesis of psychophysical parallelism.

"Although an unsatisfactory compromise, it has to be conceded that by trusting to the materialistic horn of the psychophysical dilemma the great advantage is gained of looking upon perceptible objects and occurrences as existing in all reality in an external world independent of being perceived, allowing them, moreover, to be accurately described, measured, and their invariable connections positively ascertained, so that by these definite signs they can at all times be discriminated as positively recognized realities. (25). Trusting, on the other hand, to the lead of the idealistic side of the psychophysical dilemma, one reaches the incontestable fact that all subjective or individual experience consists of mental phenomena; that therefore all physical knowledge, however positive and reliable, turns out to be after all wholly a mental possession made up of specific percepts and concepts. Philosophically speaking, the perceptible world is being apparently entirely absorbed by mind. (26).

"Now as neither materialism nor idealism can account for memory, but has nevertheless to invoke its aid in order not to remain void of content, the fundamental task of philosophy and science is epistemologically to demonstrate the existence of the real permanent

matrix which latently harbors preserved and memorized past experience. Such desiderated matrix has to be positively shown to constitute a real substance. And under real substance is philosophically and scientifically understood an entity which maintains its own identity and efficiency unimpaired, while producing or emitting a sustained manifestation of natural phenomena, being in fact the proximate source of the becoming of conscious appearances. In Kant's words: "In it (substance) alone is to be sought the seat of the fruitful source of the appearances.' (27).

"Idealism, admitting but one single- all-inclusive mental content, has even boldly to deny the independent substantial existence of individual human beings. This denial of our self-existence is rather a serious matter that closely concerns all of us, as it has been virtually the cause of no end of fanatical nature-perverting beliefs and practices. (29).

"The only mental or ideal existence we are actually aware of is the all-revealing conscious content, and this has as such obviously no power whatever to forcibly affect the outside world, and to make itself directly known to any outside percipient. Fancy you and me to be pure ideal or spiritual beings, or for that matter to be the mere flesh and blood perceptible beings we really are. It is a positive fact that anyway we can nowise become directly aware of, nowise perceive the content of our respective consciousness. (30).

"But if human beings do not consist of mental or ideal stuff, nor of what is held to be material stuff, of what do they really consist? They evidently consist of non-phenomenal, substantial stuff that has power to compel to arise in the conscious content of beholders their symbolical representation, and that contains latently preserved a vast store of memorized past experience. Their presence and their superficial characteristics become revealed by means of percepts mostly visual and tactual. Their sundry activities are made known by means of definite motions of these percepts. All this information, minutely serviceable as it is, consists only of emblematic signs. To gain a somewhat adequate idea of how profoundly the real human being's nature remains enigmatic in this mere perceptual revelation let us imagine that within the conscious content of an observer the bodily percept of another human being visually arises, sense-compelled. Nothing has affected the observer's vision save a specifically constituted impingement of what are called ethereal vibrations. Thereupon within his subjective sphere of special luminosity a definitely shaded and colored form makes its appearance,

which is recognized as representing a human being. Noticing the characteristics, features and motions of the visually aroused apparition within his conscious content the observer interprets the significance of these perceptual signs entirely by means of his own intrinsically gathered and memorized experience, supplementing what is essentially implied by the signalized vision. He himself, by dint of his own mental endowments, fills the empty visual form with as much or as little meaning as his own introspective experience allows. (31-32).

"The real human being has been shown to be a perceptible, power-endowed, extra-conscious entity, that compels through sense-stimulation—mostly of a vicarious character—a perceptual representation called his body to arise in the conscious content of beholders. This real human being is thus revealed to the actual awareness of outsiders solely by means of this perceptual bodily appearance. To himself the awareness of this visual and tactual body is likewise a mere perceptual, sense-aroused appearance within his own conscious content. (35).

"The animal (is) developed into a human being by the acquisition of speech, engendered in social intercourse... Without the use of linguistic signs conceptual thinking is impossible... and rational conduct is rendered mentally possible by memorized past experience, consciously apprehended (37-41).

"Life had a most humble mundane beginning in a mere see-saw movement of alternate disintegration from without, and reintegration from within, manifest in the perceptually revealed primitive living substance... Hunger and assimilation of restitutive nutriment on the part of the organic individual would secure only its own preservation, and life would have become extinct on our globe in a single generation—fulfilling thereby without much ado the fervently professed desire of the ascetics. This would infallibly have happened of the process of the creative development of vital endowments, to which we owe our own existence, did not involve the 'wicked' propagation of 'sinful' individuals, and therewith the preservation of the 'fallen' race. (50-51).

"What is so strikingly witnessed in the circumscribed life-history of insects, namely, that their entire vital activity, from beginning to end of their career, is directed toward the propagation of their race; a predetermined reproductive end-result arrived at unbeknown to themselves—this unmistakably teleological process affords a certain analogical insight into what productively occurs in phyletic organic

development. (55). . . . The world as revealed in the symbolical medium of sentiency and consciousness is obviously a new creation; something newly arising into perceptual existence. It has become toilsomely embodied in what perceptually appears as specifically organized vital structure. (56).

"The principal results in the scientifically valid interpretation of the perceptible world-revelation have been gained by close observation and exact numerical determination of the behavior of the sense-compelled appearances arising within the conscious content of the observer. These appearances faithfully, though only symbolically, reflect what really happens in the sense-compelling, extra-conscious world. Consequently such scientific interpretation of phenomenal appearances, however exact, can yield only phenomenalistic information in terms of extension and motion. The intrinsic significance of the perceptual appearances and their motor changes has to be supplied by the experiencing subject's own organically memorized and systematized knowledge. (59).

"Rational enlightenment, mostly scientifically attained, has liberated progressive nations from many terrifying and pitiless superstitions, also from the former thralldom of utmost intolerance, which mercilessly inflicted the cruelest penalties on unbelievers in the tenets of this or that dominant theological creed. In order entirely to overcome the injurious and unjustifiable anthropomorphic conception of a creative power, volitionally and intentionally in control of all that happens in nature, it will be well to get to understand that our own will and our own intelligence, which are obviously the real prototypes upon which are patterned the will and intelligence ascribed to a postulated deity, are utterly powerless to impart or change under given conditions any property or mode of behavior of the interacting constituents of the cosmic order and its procedure. (68). . . . In the fashioning of organisms the surpassing incomprehensibility of creative might is most strikingly evinced. (70).

"On the whole the conviction has preponderated that true reality is revealed by conception and not by perception. The consistent outcome of this prevalent persuasion is that the real world is of ideal consistency, and has its real being in mind, consciousness or spirit. (75). . . . What are called laws of thought, often looked upon as super-humanly normative, receive no less their validity from vitally organized correspondence of conceptual thinking to what such thinking applies to. (86).

"What is deemed objective in nature, or above it, is not directly

given in experience, but only inferred from certain actually given subjective data within the conscious content. It is obvious, then, that subjectively revealed spacial forms, for instance, inferred to have their real existence in an objective extra-conscious world, have of necessity to conform to subjective space-perception, of which they are—as thus actually experienced—sense-compelled determinations. (87-88).

“In cultured communities, social conduct and social development have become the chief concern of humanized existence. (90) . . . And here justice and benevolence reveal themselves as the leading principles that make for progressive humanization, and for realization of the social ideal. This ideal of social solidarity is conceived as a state, in which all humanity is imagined to share in the benefactions of a rationally and ethically cultured life. (91)

“Liberty, Equality, Fraternity are sublime watchwords to steadfastly remind us of the far-off humanitarian goal. But that goal cannot be reached before a great majority of individuals composing the social community have constitutionally attained a degree of humanization that renders them socially congenial and capable of consistently performing the duties involved in the realization of the ideal state” (92).

THE CHRIST MYTH OF DREWS.

The object of this book¹ is to prove that the Jesus Christ of Christianity is a pre-Christian Hebrew sun- and fire-god by the name of Jesus, identical with Joshua, Elijah, John the Baptist and other assumed Hebrew forms of these gods, whom the writers of the New Testament transformed into a human being, represented as having lived in the first century of our era under the name of Jesus, though such an historical Jesus never existed.

In order to prove that there was such a pre-Christian God the author presents to the reader, especially in the first part “The pre-Christian Jesus” but also in the second part “The Christian Jesus”, an enormous amount of information and material taken from the comparative study of ancient religions. The facts given in this way will be of great value even to the reader who can not follow the author in the final conclusions he draws from them, for they show how many different pre-Christian conceptions and ideas, mythical,

¹ *The Christ Myth*. By Arthur Drews. Translated from the third edition (revised and enlarged) by C. Delisle Burns. Open Court Pub. Co., 1910.